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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study of Illinois' educational evaluation process, in which external evaluators conduct the evaluation, are presented in this paper. Methodology involved analysis by State Board of Education staff of requests for proposals (RFPs); these were mailed to 121 potential bidders for external evaluation. Bidders included universities, individual consultants, private nonprofit and for-profit companies, and regional research laboratories. Application of systematic standards to the proposals resulted in the consistently higher ranking of the for-profit corporations over universities or nonprofit corporations. Findings indicate that a thorough examination of researchers' credentials is needed, as well as quality controls and monitoring that focus on staffing, technical design, time frame, and the specification of expected outcomes. A conclusion is that for-profit corporations are more likely to respond to the needs of the funding source within the time frames involved. Three tables are included. Appendices include the request for proposal process, reform evaluation results, and results of applying standards. (LMI)

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Assessing Educational Reform: Illinois Experience

A Paper Presented at the American
Educational Research Association
Annual Meeting

by
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Assessing Educational Reform: Illinois Experience

Education Reform

During the 1980s, the nation observed the most thorough and sustained effort to reform the American public educational system (ISBE, 1985). The release of A Nation At Risk in 1983, brought to a pinnacle the growing concern among those who have turned to the schools --- to benefit their children and grandchildren --- and found them needing improvement. The education reform movement spread nationwide and in Illinois, major legislation intended to help schools improve was passed in 1985. According to the Education Commission of the States, it put Illinois at the "head of the class" in school reform nationwide. The result of that legislative session --- the Education Reform of 1985, contained 169 individual components comprising a comprehensive, far reaching approach to strengthening and improving educational opportunities for children.

The 169 separate elements of the legislative package are most easily examined when categorized under six themes: A New View of Schooling, Children-At-Risk, the Quality of Educational Personnel, A New Role for Principals, Reorganization, and the Work Continues. A common and consistent thread is woven throughout the fabric of these thematic areas --- a clearly defined emphasis on student learning. While the new laws approach school improvement from a variety of directions, they all eventually focus on the same question: when this change is made, what benefits will be realized for improving students' opportunities to learn and, through them, improving student achievement.

The vision of the General Assembly and the Governor in approving the Education Reform of 1985, was to revitalize elementary and secondary schools in Illinois. The ensuing years brought about the development and implementation of numerous program initiatives.

Reform Evaluation

Five years after the passage of the 1985 reform, and in response to an Illinois State Board Goal --- To Evaluate Educational Reform Efforts in Illinois and Determine Areas in Which Changes and/or Additional Efforts Are Needed --- a systematic evaluation effort was developed and implemented. Money appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly for the evaluations carried with it the stipulation that an external evaluator conduct the efforts.

Selection of Programs to be Evaluated

Although the Educational Reform Package of 1985 included 169 individual initiatives, only 18 were considered by the Illinois State Board Administrative Cabinet to be programs operated by districts having direct impact on students and teaching staff and therefore in need of being evaluated. To date, eight (8) of the program areas have been evaluated.

Request For Proposal (RFP) Process

In order to select an external evaluator, a Request for Proposal (RFP) process was used with each of the eight (8) evaluation efforts (Appendix A). The RFP's follow the same basic boiler plate and specify what is to be evaluated, what questions need to be answered and provide the time frame and maximum amount of money available. The RFP's were mailed to 121 potential bidders consisting of universities, individual consultants, private-not-for-profit and for-profit companies specializing in evaluation and research efforts, and regional research laboratories.

All proposals were reviewed by a team of internal staff using evaluation criteria specified in the RFP's. The review team consisted of members from the Research Section, from the Evaluation Section, one member from the Planning Section, and a person from the program area.

The following table reflects the result of implementing the RFP Process and provides information on the type of contractor:

Table 1

Reform Program Evaluations by Type of Contractor and Amount of Contract

Program Name	Type of Contractor	Amount
Educational Service Centers (FY 90)	University	$34,902.00
Reading Improvement (FY 90)	Private-for-Profit Corp.	$39,985.00
Administrator's Academy (FY 91)	Private not-for-Profit Corp.	$39,539.00
Prekindergarten At-Risk (FY 91)	Private for-Profit Corp.	$44,600.00
Report Card (FY 91)	University	$45,000.00
Staff Development (FY 92)	Private for-Profit Corp.	$49,981.00
Bilingual Education (FY 92)	Private not-for-Profit Corp.	$49,880.00
Gifted/Remedial Summer School (FY 92)	Private not-for-Profit Corp.	$48,708.00
	Total	$352,595.00

A point worth noting here is that a contractor could, and in fact was awarded more than one contract over the three fiscal years. In fact, the entities awarded contracts consisted of one (1) university - different departments, one (1) not-for-profit corporation - with different contract managers and one (1) for-profit corporation - included same project managers and staff. For specific descriptive information on the program and highlights of the evaluation, see Appendix B.

Fiscal constraints brought to light the need to examine the utility and quality of the evaluation efforts conducted by the external contractors. Those who had been awarded contracts were considered to be competent, reliable sources by the proposal reviewers, it was therefore necessary, to make determinations regarding credibility, using other measures.

Using sections from The Standards for Evaluation of Educational Programs, Projects and Materials (1988), (Appendix C), an effort was initiated to enable the Illinois State Board of Education to make judgments about the credibility of the evaluation reports. These judgments are based primarily on the information provided in the evaluation reports and, to some extent, on the contractors original proposals. Using a team approach, three reviewers scored the evaluation reports on their adequacy to meet the Standards. Before the scoring occurred, all labels and symbols were removed in order to remove the identify of the contractor. A yes score received a one (even yes's with qualifications), and a no received a score of zero. Since selected portions of the standards were used, a proposal could receive a score between 0 and 15. Consensus agreement was required before a standard score could be given for each standard.

The following table provides the results of applying the Standards.

Table 2

Results of Applying Standards for Evaluation
of Education Programs, Projects, and Materials by Evaluation

Program Area	Total Score
Educational Service Centers	6
Reading Improvement	14
Administrators' Academy	15
Prekindergarten At-Risk	16
Report Card	7
Staff Development	15
Bilingual	10
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	14

The two reports receiving the lowest scores were the efforts of the same university, but the individuals conducting the evaluations were from different departments within the university.

A better display of the results of applying the Standards can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of Applying the Standards for Evaluation of Education Programs, Projects and Materials by Contractor

Contractor	Results
University	
A	6
B	7
For-Profit Corp.	
A	14
B	15
C	15
Not-For-Profit Corp.	
A	15
B	10
C	14

Applying the Standards to the evaluation efforts conducted by the For-Profit-Corporation, resulted in consistently high scores for all three efforts. Standards where zero scores were given related to sufficient scope of information collection and sources of information.

The results of applying the standards to the evaluations conducted by the Not-for-Profit-Corporation were consistently high in two efforts. The two evaluation efforts receiving the high scores were conducted by the same project manager and staff. The low scoring effort was conducted by a different project manager and the evaluation effort was staffed by consultants from other states. Standards where zero scores were given related to information collection, interpretations of findings, program descriptions, disclosure of information, conclusions, and evaluation of safeguards.

The evaluations conducted by university contractors scored consistently low (6 and 7 out of 15), when the standards were applied. The specific standards where a zero score was awarded are noted as follows:

A3: Was the information collected, of sufficient scope and selected in such ways to address the RFP questions and meet the needs and interest of ISBE?

COMMENTS: In both of the evaluation efforts conducted by the university - reviewers noted that the RFP questions were not fully answered. Nor did the contractor explain or provide information as to why the questions were not adequately and completely addressed. Other areas of concern related to the limited and somewhat questionable lack of inclusion of certain stakeholders. For example, the evaluation design for effort B included the use of broad based focus groups composed of stakeholders. These groups were to provide information for the development of a survey and other information collection activities. When implemented, one of the most critical stakeholder groups - parents - was limited to the city closest to the university. The parents included in the focus group were university associated and did not represent the average or special parent. By not seeking information from a broader audience, the results from the focus group were biased.

A4: Were the perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings carefully described so that the basis for value judgments are clear?

COMMENTS: The contractor seemed to put more weight on interview and case study findings when survey results contradicted the findings. The contractor made no attempt to clarify or justify this issue.

A5: Did the evaluation report describe the program and its context, the purpose, procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that the funding agency (ISBE) could readily understand what was done and why it was done, what information was obtained, what conclusions were drawn, and what recommendations were made?

COMMENTS: The contractor did not provide an accurate description of the program area associated with the evaluation B effort. References to specific data elements comprising the program were inaccurate and therefore, the findings and results were inaccurate. For example, the contractor stated that the Illinois School Report Card contains dropout rates. The contractor had copies of the report card, the legislation and supporting information, which clearly stated what the report card contains. The dropout rate is not a part of the school report card.

Additionally, at least one of the recommendations did not have supporting documentation to back its existence. Other recommendations called for reducing the information in the report card while another recommendation called for expanding the information.

A7: Was the report released in a timely manner so that ISBE could best use the reported information?

The report or final products for their evaluation effort was due on April 30th, but was not received until June. ISBE had originally intended to use the evaluation reports in making programmatic revisions and amending legislation. Due to late receipt of the reports, we were unable to do either.

C3 Was the written evaluation open, direct, and honest in its disclosure of pertinent findings, including the limitations of the evaluation?

Yes, with qualifications. The contractors did briefly describe the limitations of the survey findings for administrators, teachers and parents, as well as nonresponse rates. They described the uses of the focus groups, interviews, and case studies. They failed, however, to describe any limitations to these last three procedures, such as respondent bias or lack of knowledge about the program. For example, one case study included an administrator's comments about the accuracy of the dropout data on the Report Card. There are no dropout figures on the Report Card. The authors failure to recognize these instances hurts the credibility of the case studies in the report.

C7: Was the evaluation complete and fair in its presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the Report Card so that the strengths can be built upon the problem areas addressed?

No, with the qualification given in C3.

D2 Was the context in which the Report Card is used examined in enough detail so that influences on it can be identified?

Yes, with qualifications. For example, the contractors case study descriptions to provide a context in which the Report Card is used. Further, the contractors response to RFP questions particularly, illustrates how the popular media's use of the report card can have indirect effects of school activities.

D10 Were the conclusions reached in the evaluation explicitly justified, so that ISBE can assess them?

No, for the reason specified in C3.

D11 Did the evaluation procedures provide safeguards to protect the evaluation findings and report against distortion by one's personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation?

No, the level of knowledge about the Report Card and the Educational Service Centers by respondents in the interviews and focus groups was not addressed in the report. This affected the credibility of the case study, interview, and focus group findings.

Implications

There are several implications that can be drawn from this exercise. These are noted as follows:

Agency Perspective: As with any effort requiring a written product, contracts are often awarded on the basis of well written proposals that specifically address the required questions being asked. The Illinois State Board of Education's experience over the last three years, leads us to believe that there is a vast difference between well written proposals and the actual implementation of the design described in the proposal and the final product or outcome. This awareness allows for certain quality control efforts to be put in place.

Proposal Review: The issue of who will be conducting the study appears to have a relationship to the quality of the expected product. The Request For Proposal requires respondents to include the names and qualifications of the proposed project manager and staff. Revised review criteria will provide for a more thorough examination of the credentials of the individuals who will staff this study.

Monitoring of Contract: Closer and consistent monitoring of the contract in the way of frequent communication via meetings and progress reports will provide a vehicle for alerting us to problem areas, such as delays, staff limitations, etc.

The monitoring activities will focus on specific areas such as:

> Staffing: Changes from the original proposal in who will staff the study will have to be approved by the Illinois State Board of Education.
>
> Technical Design: All data and information collection methods and audiences will have to be approved by the Illinois State Board of Education prior to use. This should help eliminate issues regarding scope of the information being collected and potential bias issues. Additional efforts will focus on who (stakeholders) will participate in the study. The intent will be to try to avoid narrowly defined focus groups and samples.
>
> Time Frame: The contracts awarded over the last three years limited the time frame for the evaluation studies to 7-8 months. The time frame is dictated by

budgeting requirements and the need to have information for any legislative changes by early spring. Several of the final evaluation products were not received within the contractual time frame. The late submission resulted in the inability to use the findings and recommendations to make legislative changes. In these two instances, the late submission of a final product defeated one of the purposes of conducting the evaluation. Earlier release of RFP's and selection of contractors should help with issues related to lack of time.

Specifying Expected Outcomes: It is evident that the Illinois State Board of Education will have to be more active in identifying the expected outcomes of programs. One thing that handicapped the contractors was the lack of specific stated outcome(s) for a program or lack of available data at the site level to support program outcomes.

Author Comments: It is evident from the results of this exercise, that those whose livelihood depends on producing acceptable products are more likely to conduct the studies as stated in proposals, and produce timely products. Those whose financial support is not solely contractual, may approach conducting evaluation studies from a different frame of mind. Our experience with this type of contractor leads us to believe that they are less responsive to the needs of the funding source and the time frames involved.

Appendix A

~ Goal of the Request for Proposal

This statement provides the potential bidder with a clearly stated, direction-oriented, goal(s) of the RFP.

~ Time/Fiscal Parameters

This section must outline two (2) criteria

a) Time span of the proposed contract (e.g. term of contract is March 1, ____ through June 30, ____).

b) Monetary terms of contract (e.g., amount requested not to exceed $_____; amount for subcontractor.

~ Evaluation Design

The proposal must contain an appropriate design(s) for evaluation of effectiveness of the proposed project. Types of data to be analyzed and criteria must be included.

~ Budget

The proposed budget must be presented in terms of specific objectives and cross-reference by line item of expenditure.

~ Subcontractors

The following information is required if any subcontracting is to be utilized:

1) Name and address of subcontractor(s) if known
2) Nature of contract(s)
3) Measurable and time-specific products expected
4) Associated costs

~ Project Personnel

The following information concerning project personnel must be provided:

1) Project Director
   a) Experience with activities similar to those in this RFP
   b) Experience in directing major projects, including duration of projects, similar to that requested in this RFP
   c) Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three persons, references, knowledgeable regarding past performance

2) Project Staff
   Description of similar programs and projects, including duration, for individual project staff members

3) Staff Limitations
   Limitations the program staff would have related to:
   a) Travel
   b) Length of time available to be contracted
   c) Earliest starting date

4) Other Resources
   Other resources, such as consultants, agencies, etc., from which the potential bidder can draw, not to exceed ___% of total amount)

Proposal Specifications:

a. Proposal Objectives: Objectives of proposed project must be stated in measurable terms.

b. Proposed Activities: Activities relating to each objective must be detailed in a time-specific format. Flow charts should be included.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Payment: Payment for services and expenses will be made on a reimbursement of cost basis. Dates of payment will be negotiated to insure that this office pays only for completed performance.

Rights: The Illinois State Board of Education assumes rights to all materials developed in this project.

Letter of Intent: (Note: A letter of intent is optional and is requested by the author of the RFP only if that person desires to do so. If requested, the RFP must indicate that "the letter of intent to submit a proposal should be forwarded no later than _____.").

Statement of Assurances: The attached Statement of Assurances concerning compliance with state and federal regulations must be signed. (Note: The appropriate statement is available through the Planning/Policy Analysis Section).

Compliance with Data Collection Procedures: All data collection activities to be carried out within the contract must have prior approval of form, instrumentation and content by the Illinois State Board of Education. Approval may be obtained from the Illinois State Board of Education, Office of Data Management Administration.

Past Contracts Completed: Proposals will be accompanied by a list of all major contracts completed in the last three years in related areas of expertise stating:

a) Monetary amount of each contract
b) Date each contract was completed
c) Elapsed time from each contract date to completion and submission date

Criteria:

1. Soundness of Approach: Emphasis here is on the evaluation design, including instrument selection/development, sampling (if appropriate), techniques for collecting and analyzing data, sequence and relationships of major steps, and methods for managing the contract.

2. Qualifications of Firm and Staff: This criterion includes evidence of training, prior relevant experience and the ability of the contractor to meet the terms and time constraints of this RFP.

3. Adherence to RFP: The degree to which all specifications of the RFP are followed.

4. Cost-Effectiveness: The reasonableness of proposed charges in view of the Technical Plan (design), objectives, activities/execution, products, staff qualifications and staff time allocation.

Process:

1. The Illinois State Board of Education reserves the right to reject any or all proposals submitted in response to this RFP.

2. The Illinois State Board of Education is not required to select a contractor solely on the basis of the lowest bid. The Illinois State Board of Education will negotiate with the successful bidder to assure satisfactory costs and services.

3. The Illinois State Board of Education reserves the right to negotiate the final terms of the contract. All aspects of the approved proposal from the successful applicant will become contractual obligations.

Proposal Copies: Ten copies of the proposal must be received by the contact person specified in this RFP by the close of the ISBE business day (4:30 p.m.) on _____ (Note: More than 10 copies can be required if necessary).

Contact Person _____

Department _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Project Period: Proposed project must be for the period ____ to ____. (Note: Potential bidders should be allowed at least <u>three</u> weeks to develop the proposal. At least <u>two</u> weeks should be allowed for internal ISBE review).

Appendix B
Reform Evaluation Results

FY 90

Programs evaluated:

* Reading Improvement Program
* Educational Service Centers

The Reading Improvement Program was evaluated by an out-of-state for-profit corporation. The findings of the evaluation reveal that 75% of all kindergarten through sixth grade students received services through the Reading Improvement Program. Tremendous diversity exists among schools in how programs are structured, with program design reflecting local school district needs. Many programs are targeted at specific grade levels, the preponderance of these are in kindergarten through second grade.

Thirty-five to forty percent of the students served by the Reading Improvement Program are not receiving reading services from any other source. In general, students are perceived to be performing better in reading and the benefits which result from the Reading Improvement Program are worth the implementation.

The Educational Service Center Program was evaluated by an Illinois university. The results of the evaluation indicated that Educational Service Centers in Illinois provide a wide variety of services to local school districts and their personnel and, in general, have been successful. Strengths were cited in areas of inservice education and staff development. Particular areas of noted strength include services targeted to the Administrators' Academy and school improvement initiatives related to educational reform.

Weaknesses include the lack of clarity about their purpose, lack of consistency across the state in quality of service, and political turmoil surrounding their governance and operation.

FY 91

Programs evaluated:

* Illinois School Report Card
* Illinois Administrators' Academy
* Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program

The Illinois School Report Card Program was evaluated by an Illinois university. The results show there exists substantial support among parents and other stakeholders for the School Report Card as an accountability measure, a means to compare schools, and a process and document for promoting increased discussion about schools. The requirement that the School Report Card data be made available to local media has helped inform parents about their school and other schools in their area. There is some evidence that changes are taking place in schools as a result of the School Report Card, but most of the changes cited were intangible and difficult to measure.

Information identified as being most important by stakeholders include average class size, pupil/teacher ratio, district type and average size, per-pupil expenditures, breakdown of district finances by funds, student attendance rate, graduation rate, nationally-normed achievement information and student mobility.

The most problematic student information item is the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) test scores. The study found little evidence that the IGAP test information was considered important either by parents or by school practitioners. The most frequently cited recommendations were to make the report card easier to understand, to reduce jargon and technical terms, use graphs and charts where possible, and improve the format and use of space.

The Illinois Administrators' Academy Program was evaluated by a not-for-profit corporation. The findings indicated that administrators throughout the state perceive the Academy to be an important link in facilitating the role of the principal as instructional leader and improving teacher performance.

Academy strengths include regional involvement, the quality of Illinois State Board of Education trainers and program support, reasonable costs, convenient training locations, flexible scheduling, timely and appropriate program topics, and trainers who are experienced practitioners.

Participation among principals and superintendents in the selective strand of the program continues to grow with substantial numbers electing to participate in the advanced training phases of the academy.

Recommendations include preparing general operational guidelines for the Academy to reflect developmental changes that have occurred since 1986, developing standardized data collection procedures, encouraging inter-ESC cooperation, providing a broader range of academy services to superintendents, and continuing to provide training for local administrators to foster positive educational change within regions.

The Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program was evaluated by a for-profit corporation. The findings of the evaluation indicated that the program has been implemented as indicated in the law and the State Board of Education regulations. Programs are diverse and permit local needs to determine local services. The appropriate target population, children at-risk of academic failure, is being served. In the variety of programs that exist, developmentally appropriate practices have been implemented. The programs have similar philosophies and address the total child physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Programs are implementing a variety of parent involvement activities with parent participation being high for the populations being served.

Reports of program success are similar across all projects and include assessment in valid outcome measures of readiness for kindergarten, promotion rates, special education and supplemental program placement, and student performance by subject area. Well over half (70% - 80%) of prekindergarten children followed-up for one, two, and three years are reported to have average or above average performance in reading, mathematics, language and behavior.

Recommendations include the continued support and promotion of flexible local programs, cooperative joint agreements, and interagency - inter-program collaboration, and continued increase in the allocation of funds to permit the program to expand to the districts and to serve all identified at-risk children without diminishing the funds currently expended.

FY 92

Programs evaluated include:

* Bilingual Education
* Staff Development
* Gifted/Remedial

Highlights from the Evaluation of the Illinois Staff Development Program

The Illinois Staff Development Program was established by the 1985 Illinois Reform Act (Section 2-3.59, 2-3.60, School Code) and requires staff development program development and implementation from all public school districts throughout the state. Each district that submits a plan receives funding based on their number of full-time equivalent certified instructional staff. During the past six years, the average annual appropriation to this program has been $3,000,000.00.

Key Findings

* The existing Illinois Staff Development Program planning model designed by ISBE is a theoretically sound model and is of great practical value in guiding local districts in planning staff development programs.

* Teachers and administrators perceive staff development programs as an effective means of improving student outcomes and classroom instruction.

* The staff development plans examined reflect the shifting trend in staff development from the traditional top down approach to a more "grass roots" or school-based effort.

* A continuum of staff development opportunities is available in Illinois for teacher preparation from one-day institutes to planned ongoing efforts previously sponsored by local districts and ESCs.

* Different models of delivery are used by the various providers of staff development activities. ESCs usually offer workshops that vary in length from two hours to multi-session opportunities. ESRs typically offer only single-day institutes; some sponsor regional conferences in addition to or in lieu of institute days. Some local districts may use all of the models of delivery while others may only participate in regional institutes.

* The majority of teachers indicate that their needs for staff development have changed over the past three years.

* Teachers noted lack of time as the primary factor in inhibiting their attendance at staff development programs.

* The focus for planning and implementing staff development programs has been appropriately placed at the local level; however, sufficient technical assistance is not available from ISBE nor received from ESCs for developing quality plans and evaluation procedures.

* The level of cooperation between agencies depends on the governance structure that exists between the ESR, the ESC, and the local district. Cooperation ranges from very high to competitive, to counter-productive.

Key Recommendation

* Adequate funding of staff development programs in the State of Illinois is needed in order to improve the quality and quantity of services that are currently being promoted.

* Leadership in the area of professional development is needed from all levels of education. The ISBE, local districts and building administrators should make professional development for the teaching pool a priority.

* Local districts should use methods for identifying needs that are based on the gaps between where schools and districts are and where they want to be in terms of student, teacher, school, and district variables.

* To eliminate duplicative effort and administrative costs, all responsibilities for staff development and associated funding currently assigned to the ESRs in the Illinois School Code should be transferred to the ESCs.

* Regional responsibilities for staff development should be consolidated into the ESCs, including responsibilities for Special Education and Vocational Education.

* The current ISBE staff development program planning model and application process should be continued with some minor modifications.

Highlights from the Evaluation of Bilingual Education Programs

Bilingual education programs were established in Illinois in recognition of the fact that instruction only in English is often inadequate for children whose native tongue is another language. In order to ensure equal educational opportunity for all children, the Illinois General Assembly has mandated that either a Transitional Bilingual Education Program or a Transitional Program of Instruction be provided for K-12 limited-English proficiency students in order to assist them in achieving grade level proficiency in English. The FY 92 state appropriation for bilingual education programs was $49,354,900.00.

Key Findings

* A wide variety of instructional techniques is in use but the pull-out model is very prominent, especially in lower grades.

* There is a consensus among administrators and program staff that effective programs are characterized by a high quality staff, well defined services, integration with mainstream curriculum, emphasis on reinforcing student self esteem, and maintaining flexibility within a rapidly changing environment.

* Administrators who identify their programs as effective say that they are sufficiently funded, have public awareness and participation, have adequately trained staff, and emphasize individual student needs.

* Bilingual education personnel perceive that the educational experience of students who have exited the programs tends to be satisfactory, unless the student lacks basic academic skills.

* The greatest factors cited by education administrators as limiting the quality of transitional programs are limited state funding, lack of qualified staff, and lack of continuing staff development opportunities.

* Transitional programs are coordinated with mainstream education, but coordination with other services such as Chapter 1 and Special Education is less likely due to lack of time, lack of bilingually sensitive staff to deliver these services, and a concern for over-emphasis of these special service areas at the expense of the student's total educational experience.

Key Recommendations

* Increase funds to provide more staff development opportunities for both bilingual and mainstream teachers and administrators.

* Issue guidelines for integrating bilingual education programs with Chapter 1, Special Education, and Gifted.

* Issue guidelines regarding recommended transition criteria tied to student outcomes rather than a state statutory limit in terms of years served.

* Establishing procedures to formally track the progress, both academic and social, of currently served and of transitioned students.

* Extend funding to provide services (including tutoring, counseling, and supplementary English-language instruction) to students who have transitioned into mainstream programs.

* To the extent practicable, emphasize keeping language minority students in their "home" schools.

* Consider revising the state's position on the use of Title VII funds, especially when funding levels are being reduced.

Highlights from the Evaluation of Summer School Gifted and Remedial Programs

The Summer School Gifted and Remedial Program was established as part of the educational reform legislation enacted by the Illinois General Assembly during its 1985 session. The program provides qualified districts across the state with grants to conduct a summer school program for students who are gifted, talented, or in need of remedial education, without having to pay tuition, fees, or instructional material expenses. The program first became operational in the summer of 1986. The FY 92 appropriation for the Summer School Gifted and Remedial Program was $15,000,000.00.

Key Findings

* The major advantages cited by local administrators for offering the program were the flexibility of the program in accommodating districts needs, the cost efficiency of the course offerings vis-a-vis repeating a grade, and the varied instructional activities that stimulated student attendance.

* The factors identified by superintendents, principals and teachers as having the greatest positive impact on the operation of the program were the teacher-student ratio, parents' attitudes toward the program, curriculum materials, and the opportunities for students to use computers. The uncertainty of state appropriations was identified as having a negative impact.

* Local school administrators and teachers identified the following positive outcomes for students who participated in the program: a) student grade retention had decreased, b) academic performance had improved, c) students were better prepared to do their school work, and d) student attitudes toward school had improved.

* Local school administrators and teachers indicated that the program could be improved by: a) increasing coordination between summer school and regular classroom teachers, b) obtaining parental support for the program, c) getting the students of greatest need into the program, d) promoting good student attendance, e) providing qualified teachers, and f) providing student transportation.

* Eighty-three percent of the funds for the program were targeted to remedial programs and the remaining 17% were used for gifted programs. The allocations of these funds were 83% for certificated personnel salaries, 10% for instructional materials, 5% for pupil transportation, and the remainder for students tuitioned out to other districts or outside agencies.

Key Recommendations

* Encourage smaller districts to enter in a multiple district program in order to provide a broader range of programs to their students and to improve cost effectiveness.

* Encourage Educational Service Centers to provide services to districts relevant to the summer school program, such as assessment and coping with problems identified by districts.

* Revise the ISBE grant application form and schedule for submission to facilitate program monitoring and utility of the program database in generating timely reports.

* When funds become available for the summer school program, make grant information available to districts as soon as possible so that they may proceed with program planning.

Appendix C
Results of Applying Standards

A1 Were the audiences involved in or affected by the evaluation?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card	X	
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

A3 Was the information collected, of sufficient scope and selected in such ways to address the RFP questions and meet the needs and interests of ISBE?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement		X
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual		X
Gifted/Remedial Summer School		X

A4 Were the perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings carefully described so that the basis for value judgments are clear?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development		X
Bilingual		X
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

A5 Did the evaluation report describe the program and its context, the purpose, procedures and findings of the evaluation so that the funding agency (ISBE) could readily understand what was done, why it was done, what information was obtained, what conclusions were drawn, and what recommendations were made?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual		X
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

A6 Were the findings disseminated to ISBE and other right-to-know audiences, so that they can assess and use the findings?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card	X	
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School		X

A7 Was the report released in a timely manner so that ISBE could best use the reported information?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy		X
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

A8 Was the evaluation planned and conducted in ways that encouraged follow-through by ISBE?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card	X	
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

C3 Was the written evaluation open, direct, and honest in its disclosure of pertinent findings, including the limitations of the evaluation?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual		X
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

C4 Did the formal parties to the evaluation respect and assure the public's right to know, within the limits of other related principles and statues, such as those dealing with public safety and the right to privacy?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card	X	
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

C7 Was the evaluation complete and full in its presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the programs so that the strengths can be built upon and the problem areas addressed?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

D1 Was the program sufficiently examined so that the program being considered in the evaluation is clearly identified?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card	X	
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

D2 Was the context in which the programs are used examined in enough detail so that influence on them can be identified?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

D3 Was the purposes and procedures of the evaluation monitored and described in enough detail so that they could be identified and assessed?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card	X	
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

D4 Were the sources of information described in enough detail so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement		X
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual	X	
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

D10 Were the conclusions reached in the evaluation explicitly justified so that ISBE can assess them?

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers		X
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual		X
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

D 11 Did the evaluation procedures provide safeguards to protect the evaluation findings and report against dislocation by one's personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation.

	Yes	No
Educational Service Centers	X	
Reading Improvement	X	
Administrators' Academy	X	
Prekindergarten At-Risk	X	
Report Card		X
Staff Development	X	
Bilingual		X
Gifted/Remedial Summer School	X	

References

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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